
CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE (COW) New Item for Review and Consideration

**Meeting Date: 05/05/2016
Agenda Item: 4B2**

Issue Description: Explore the feasibility of developing a “Housing First” approach to homelessness in Tempe, including necessary wraparound services and a community-engagement component.

Presented by: Vice Mayor Woods, Councilmembers Kuby and Navarro

What are you looking to accomplish? Establish a Committee of the Whole Working Group to explore national best practices in a Housing First model as well as identify potential grants and other funding opportunities.

Background Information: Despite ongoing investments in support services through organizations such as the Tempe Community Action Agency and others, the number of people experiencing homelessness within the City of Tempe has remained relatively stable. Even a brief amount of research indicates that in cities that are decreasing the numbers of their homeless population, Housing First is by far the most commonly used and universal approach to the problem and the one endorsed by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).

“Housing First” is an approach that offers permanent, supportive housing as quickly as possible for individuals and families experiencing homelessness and then provides supportive, wraparound services and connections to the community-based supports needed to avoid a return to homelessness and transition to independent housing. Principles of Housing First, as defined by HUD, include moving people directly into housing from streets and shelters without precondition and providing a variety of wraparound services as needed. Housing First can be implemented as either a project-based or scattered-site model.

Multiple cities have launched Housing First programs including Boston, Seattle, and Denver. Each city has shown decreases in homelessness overall, as well as reduced use and cost of emergency services. Denver alone has provided permanent supportive housing to over 200 residents.

Components of a Comprehensive Housing First Approach: A successful Housing First program requires comprehensive wraparound services and appropriate funding, as well as a regional approach when possible. The role of the Working Group would be to identify the appropriate services and partner with direct service providers to make them available to those in need. The group would also do outreach to neighboring cities and MAG’s Regional Committee on Homelessness to identify areas for partnership and collaboration. Additionally, the group would work to identify potential funding sources for both the housing and service components including grant funding, federal dollars available through HUD, and other potential sources.

The Tempe City Council is committed to:

- 1. Ensuring a safe and secure community through a commitment to public safety and justice.*
- 2. Developing and maintaining a strong community connection by emphasizing the importance of open government, customer service and communication with community members.*
- 3. Enhancing the quality of life for all Tempe residents and workers through investment in neighborhoods, parks, the arts, human services, and city amenities, with an emphasis on equity and diversity.*
- 4. Implementing sustainable growth and development strategies, including improving Tempe’s public transit system to meet future needs, by actively seeking innovative technologies and leading the way in creating a more sustainable community.*
- 5. Maintaining long term financial stability and vitality by focusing on economic development, business retention and generating employment to create a robust and diverse economic base.*

Community Engagement: In recent weeks, Council has had the opportunity to hear from many local residents and business owners about their concern for the people experiencing homelessness in the City of Tempe. Regardless of one's position on any given program or ordinance, the community agrees on the need to try something new, as the status quo has not been helpful in solving the problem. Cities with the greatest success in combatting homelessness do so with community-driven support and Tempe should seek to do the same. A Town Hall-style community conversation would allow for an initial outreach to provide information on options and national best practices while gathering feedback on the ways in which the residents and business community might support the City's efforts.

What stakeholders should be engaged with this process? City Human Services staff, Tempe Homeless Coalition, Tempe Community Action Agency, MAG Regional Committee on Homelessness, direct service providers, business owners, residents, and people experiencing homelessness.

Anticipated Timeframe and Staff Resources: Approximately 75-100 hours of staff time is needed to gather and evaluate stakeholder and community feedback and to identify best practices and options.

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